

**HENRY
ABBOTT**

LOST POND

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"Lost Pond" was a tradition, a myth. It had never been seen by any living person. Two dead men, it was alleged, had visited it on several occasions while they were yet living.

Wonderful tales were told about that pond for which many persons had hunted, but which no one of the present generation had ever been able to find.

Every guide in Long Lake township talked about Lost Pond and repeated the legends, which through the passing years had probably lost none of their original enticements. Many of these guides had even got the stories at first hand from Captain Parker and Mitchel Sabattis.

Captain Parker, a famous hunter and trapper, had died about ten years ago at the good old age of ninety-four years. Mitchel Sabattis, an Indian, who had married a white woman and had brought up a family of husky half-breeds, was the first settler in the Long Lake country. He was a highly respected citizen, and a mountain and a United States post office had been named after him. Sabattis lived to be a very old man. Many believed him to be past a hundred years when he died, but the family Bible was not available to prove the date of his birth.

Now, all of the natives knew that Lost Pond was somewhere on Seward Mountain, and they apparently believed that the best fishing place in the State was right in that pond. "By Mighty! that pond was just alive with speckled trout – big ones. You could catch all you wanted there in a few minutes. The water fairly boiled with the jumping fish. Now, if we could only find it," etc.

To the layman it would seem, possibly a difficult, but certainly not an impossible task, to find that lost pond; and if it was such a remarkable fishing and hunting place as tradition painted it, why had not some one combed out that mountain and recovered the pond?

Seward Mountain, seen from a distance of ten or fifteen miles, looked like a hogback ridge. A nearer view disclosed the fact that it included several peaks and ridges, and really covered a lot of ground. The highest peak was perhaps not more than twenty-five hundred feet above the lake. But if one could draw a straight line through its base eastward from Raquette River to the foot of Sawtooth Mountain, the line would measure about twelve miles. If a similar line could be stretched northward from Cold River to Ampersand Lake, it would be about eight miles.

One cannot, however, always go through a mountain. It is usually necessary to go over or around it; and following up and down the ridges, through ravines and around swamps and other obstacles, the travel distances above named might be doubled, and then some. The mountain was covered with forest, and there was not a human habitation on it or within many miles of it in any direction. Some lumbering had been done along Cold River and several of its tributary creeks, but the higher portions were untouched and the heavy spruce and hemlock cover looked black from up the lake.

Giving proper consideration to these facts and knowing the Long Lake guides as well as I did, I could readily understand that it might be less strenuous to tell the marvelous stories about Lost Pond than it would be to go up in the Seward country and search out the pond. Then there was always the possibility that too much investigation might spoil a good story.

Ever since childhood I have possessed that very human characteristic of wanting that which is forbidden, longing for what is just out of reach; and when a thing is said to be impossible, I at once have an intense desire to undertake to do that thing.

Now, there was good trout fishing in many of the ponds and streams tributary to Long Lake which were comparatively easy to reach; but this lost pond which I had heard so much about was so "impossible to find" that I was possessed with an irresistible longing to find it, to see what it looked like, to fish in it. So I discussed the matter with Bige, who, with some show of reluctance, agreed to assist.

Bige and I had made many camping excursions up in the Cold River country; had followed its crooked course about fifteen miles upstream; had explored and fished a number of its tributary creeks on the Santanoni side.

Cold River carries the drainage from Santanoni Mountain and foothills on its left bank and on its right receives the flow from the eastern and southern slopes of Mount Seward.

One day in July, when Bige and I were up on Santanoni, from an opening through the trees above a ledge of rocks we looked cross the valley to Seward, studied the contour of its basins, peaks and ridges, and agreed upon the spot where Lost Pond ought to be found. We also determined upon a route which we should take to reach it, and appointed the following Tuesday as the time when we should make our start.

Monday night we packed our duffel so that we might make an early start in the morning. We took our small light-weight tent, blankets, aluminum cooking utensils, fishing rods, and food for three days. If we should get some fish the grub might be stretched across four days.

We expected some strenuous tramping, so determined to "go light" and omitted many things we usually take on our trips; but when we "weighed in," Bige's pack tipped the scales at fifty-two pounds and mine weighed thirty-seven. I am not selfish in such matters, so gave Bige all the heavy things.

With our two packs stowed amidships, Bige in the bow with a pair of oars and I in the stern wielding a paddle, we got away in the morning just as the sun broke over East Inlet Mountain and gilded the summit of Sugar Loaf on the opposite side of the lake.

The early birds greeted us with a chorus of song, seeming to wish us luck as we made good speed down the lake, passing Owl's-Head Mountain on the left, Sabattis on the right, and farther down Blueberry, Kempshall and Buck mountains, while Santanoni and Seward loomed up in the distance.

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